

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard, Tom O'Halleran Say Revised Meth Bill Won't Stop Illegal Labs

(Phoenix, Ariz. - May 11, 2005) Attorney General Terry Goddard and Rep. Tom O'Halleran said changes made today by a legislative conference committee to the comprehensive methamphetamine bill passed by the House of Representative fall short of doing enough to stop meth production in Arizona.

The amended version of SB1473 now awaits final legislative action.

"This stripped-down bill is a victory for the pharmaceutical lobbyists and a serious defeat in Arizona's fight against the meth epidemic," they said in a joint statement.

"The amended bill is no compromise. It can more accurately be described as a capitulation to the pharmaceutical industry and its false claims," they said. "Our bill was modeled after an Oklahoma law that has reduced meth labs in that state by 80 percent in the past year. The bill amended today will have far less impact and doesn't even do as much as Target and other major retailers are doing voluntarily to address the meth crisis. The revised bill won't stop meth cooks from getting the pseudoephedrine they need."

The comprehensive bill, championed by Goddard and O'Halleran, R-Sedona, and supported by law enforcement leaders throughout the state, was approved last week on a 38-19 vote in the House. It would have moved all decongestant tablets containing pseudoephedrine behind pharmacy counters, required buyers to sign a log and show an ID, and limited purchases to 9 grams (about 300 pills) in 30 days. The bill allowed the decongestants in gelcap or liquid form to remain on store shelves, since pseudoephedrine in those forms is harder to convert to meth.

As amended, the bill moves some, but not all, pseudoephedrine products behind a counter but allows them to be dispensed by any store employee rather than pharmacy personnel. The bill does not require buyers to sign a log or show an ID, steps

considered vital by law enforcement officials in Oklahoma and Arizona. Buyers can purchase 9 grams in each transaction, rather than 9 grams in 30 days.

At least six states - Montana, Kansas, Iowa, Kentucky, Tennessee and Arkansas - have enacted laws this year based on the Oklahoma statute. In most of those states, the bills were approved on unanimous or near-unanimous votes.

"The pharmaceutical industry lobbied against tough meth bills in those states, too, but legislators elsewhere chose to put the public interest ahead of one industry's interest," Goddard and O'Halleran said.

Arizona leads the nation in meth use by children between 12 and 17.